

## **Bicycle and Pedestrian Program**

### **What is the program?**

The Bicycle and Pedestrian program provides technical assistance and resources to improve conditions for bicycling and walking and promote partnerships between WSDOT, local agencies, school districts, tribal nations and stakeholder groups.

In 2005, the Washington State Legislature committed \$74 million to support pedestrian and bicycle safety projects such as pedestrian and bicycle paths, sidewalks, safe routes to school and transit. The Bicycle and Pedestrian program administers this funding program and to date grants have been awarded to more than 100 projects that help reduce the more than 400 annual fatal and injury crashes involving bicycles and pedestrians and improve conditions for biking and walking across the state.

The Bicycle and Pedestrian program offers assistance and resources to project offices, traffic engineers, communicators, designers and planners in several specialty areas including:

- Improving pedestrian and bicycle safety and mobility,
- School zone and walk route design,
- Trail and path design, and
- Design for access/universal design

### **How does the program help reduce vehicle miles traveled (VMT)?**

In Washington State, more than half of all trips are under three miles, yet 80 percent of these trips are made by car.<sup>1</sup> Part of the earliest and most effective areas on which to focus for reducing VMT and related emissions is lowering the number of short vehicle trips – especially focusing on urban and urbanizing areas. Most people drive for short trips because, in many places, the built environment makes walking and biking either uninviting or difficult.

Biking and walking are increasing in Washington, particularly in urban and urbanizing areas where housing infill is occurring. Bicycle commuting has increased 75 percent in the past ten years.<sup>2</sup> Biking and walking currently account for about 6 percent of statewide commute trips.<sup>3</sup> In the Puget Sound Region, bicycling and walking account for 9 percent of all trips.<sup>4</sup> In several urban core areas across Washington, bicycling and walking account for 15 percent of all trips.<sup>5</sup> Bicycle and pedestrian activities are already reducing significant emissions and VMT. In preparation for a two year pilot study of the potential impacts of bicycle/pedestrian transportation, Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) conducted baseline travel surveys in four pilot and one control community. They found that bicycling and walking trips currently substitute for an estimated 156.1 million VMT annually in the four pilot communities.<sup>6</sup> A second

<sup>1</sup> National Household Travel Survey (NHTS), [www.bts.gov/programs/national\\_household\\_travel\\_survey/](http://www.bts.gov/programs/national_household_travel_survey/).

<sup>2</sup> US Census, [www.census.gov/](http://www.census.gov/).

<sup>3</sup> NHTS; US Census;

Regional Household Activity Survey Analysis Report, PSRC (2006)). [www.psrc.org/data/surveys/hhsurvey/index.htm](http://www.psrc.org/data/surveys/hhsurvey/index.htm).

<sup>4</sup> Regional Household Activity Survey Analysis Report, PSRC (2006)). [www.psrc.org/data/surveys/hhsurvey/index.htm](http://www.psrc.org/data/surveys/hhsurvey/index.htm)

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> FHWA Interim Report to the U.S. Congress on the Non-motorized Transportation Pilot Program SAFETEA-LU Section 1807, November 2007.

phase of the FHWA study focusing on impacts of specific bicycle and pedestrian improvement projects is due to be completed in 2010, with preliminary findings available this year.

### **What is happening now (current status/activities)?**

The recent update of the State's Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan found that cities, counties and ports in Washington have identified more than \$1.2 billion in unmet pedestrian and bicycle improvement needs. This year WSDOT received 93 applications from cities, counties and schools for bicycle and pedestrian projects totaling \$36 million.

Through these improvements and connections, the Bicycle and Pedestrian program also supports the Commute Trip Reduction program and the Growth and Transportation Efficiency Centers.

Bicycle and Pedestrian program has also developed a partnership with the Department of Health and regional transportation planning organizations using funds secured through the Center for Disease Control (CDC). This partnership project, called *Active Community Environments Initiative*, aims to improve the health and quality of life for Washington's citizens by improving and increasing opportunities to bicycle and walk.

### **What can we be doing with existing resources to enhance the program's ability to reduce VMT?**

As outlined in the State Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan, the effectiveness of the Bicycle and Pedestrian program could be increased by:

- Benchmarking and tracking performance statewide including the development of a user count database.
- Expanding resources and technical assistance provided through the Bicycle and Pedestrian program.
- Requiring bicycle and pedestrian design and funding training for agency staff, particularly as part of new engineers' training.
- Considering bicycle and pedestrian needs in all planning and corridor studies.
- Revising the scoping process to include more definition for bicycle and pedestrian components.

### **What could we (or should we) be doing with additional resources? (i.e. where are the opportunities for growth/enhancement)?**

With gas prices rising, housing infill projects increasing across the state, and more communities conducting inventories and developing bicycle and pedestrian safety, mobility and universal design, there is an increasing demand for the services and resources of the Bicycle and Pedestrian program.

In addition to meeting increased demand for services, there is an immediate opportunity for bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure investments (i.e., trails, sidewalks) to be included as part of a WSDOT programmatic environmental strategy.<sup>7</sup> WSDOT's work with DOH to develop and

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<sup>7</sup> **NOTE:** A recent study conducted by the Bay Area Air Quality Management District has taken the next step in estimating impacts of new trails and bike lanes on VMT and CO<sub>2</sub>. This study found, based on an evaluation of many types of projects ranging from rideshare programs to vanpooling to traffic operations improvements, that trails and bike lanes are one of the most cost effective investments in terms of VMT and CO<sub>2</sub> reduction (an average cost of \$340 per ton of CO<sub>2</sub> eliminated)." ICF Consulting, Performance Review of Selected TFCA Project Types Final Report, Prepared for the Bay Area Air Quality Management District, August 1, 2006.

incorporate data to assess potential public health impacts of transportation projects as required by the State Environmental Policy Act and the National Environment Policy Act is currently unfunded and additional resources would enable this work to continue.

Additional resources are also needed immediately to improve regional travel demand models and their ability to consider bicycle and pedestrian improvements or develop new modeling tools that more accurately weigh the costs and benefits of all types of transportation investments. Part of this effort could include increased regional and local user count data collection and revision of existing state and regional survey tools to more accurately capture the amount of bicycling and walking and the impacts of bicycle and pedestrian investments.

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